

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Subject: Changeable Copy Signs

Issue: The Town of Truckee prohibits “changeable copy signs, except as approved for a community information, religious facility, movie theater, or gasoline pricing sign.” The Development Code defines a changeable copy sign as “a sign designed to allow the changing of copy through manual, mechanical, or electrical means including time and temperature.”

Many communities prohibit changeable copy signs, primarily based upon the potential to distract drivers, create visual clutter in commercial areas, and create maintenance concerns with the timeliness of the message. Historically, Truckee has similarly prohibited such signs, which were deemed to be incompatible with the community’s character, especially when the changeable copy is plastic lettering or electronic in nature. However, Town staff believes that chalkboard signs were not envisioned at the time that the sign ordinance was adopted as they were not commonly used for outdoor signage.

In recent years the Town of Truckee has allowed, on a trial basis, the use of temporary chalkboard signs to encourage businesses to communicate to the public about special events, sales, or other relevant information. Review of the signs indicated that the chalkboard signs are in keeping with Truckee’s character, are appropriate in appearance, and are effective in communicating business messages. Further, due to the nature of the medium (chalk) they tend to be well maintained and current in their messages.

Reference: Development Code Section 18.54.050.F (Prohibited Signs); Section 18.220.020.S (Definitions, “Changeable Copy Sign”)

Policy/Procedure: The permit requirements and regulations that will apply to chalkboard signs will be as follows:

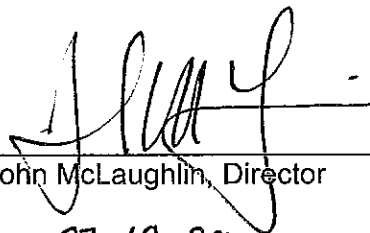
1. Only chalkboard signs with black backgrounds may be permitted.
2. Any color erasable chalk may be used, and the message may be changed at the will of the business owner.

3. Chalkboard signs shall comply with Chapter 18.54 (Signs), including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Temporary portable (A-frame) signs shall comply with Section 18.54.070.1.2 (i.e., quantity, duration of use, maximum size, location, lighting), and a Temporary Sign Permit application shall be submitted to the Community Development Department and approved prior to use of the sign.
 - b. Permanent chalkboard signs shall be considered through a Sign Plan Review application submitted to the Planning Division, shall comply with all sign standards of the sign type that is proposed (e.g., wall sign, projecting sign, ground-mounted sign, etc.), and shall count toward the total sign area and sign quantity allowed. A subsequent building permit will be required prior to installation unless waived by the Chief Building Official.
 - c. Per Section 18.54.050.J, "Obscene or offensive signs containing statements, words, or pictures of an obscene, indecent or immoral character which appeal to the prurient interest in sex, or which are patently offensive and do not have serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value" are prohibited.

When Development Code Chapter 18.54 (Signs) is next updated by the Town of Truckee, staff shall recommend to the review authority to modify the text as follows:

- Section 18.54.050.F (Prohibited Signs): "Changeable copy signs, except as approved for a community information, religious facility, movie theater, or gasoline pricing sign, and except for black-background chalkboard signs using erasable chalk."

Effective Date: July 9, 2010

Approved by: 
John McLaughlin, Director

Date: 07.10.2010